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You Gotta Go to School for That?

Knowledge, Brother John and Elvis
by **Jerry Seay** (College of Charleston)

Do you ever stop to think about how much power you have over helpless people? I'm talking about those souls who have rarely, if ever, stepped foot into a library, those hallowed halls of knowledge storage. These are the people who, if knowledge is power, have their breaker box unknowingly turned off. Those of us who have braved the gauntlet of library school sometimes find it hard to remember that there exist some people who do not have a clue about what to do when they come through the library door. After all, not everybody is crazy enough to go to library school. Who are these uninitiated? What are we to do with them when they stumble into the hallowed halls and wander around aimlessly? How did they get this way? Why do they make more

money than us?

Let us take my brother John for example. I had no choice in the matter initially. My mother just sort of forced him on me one day when I was 3 years old. I soon learned that my brother and I were almost completely opposite. This of course meant that we either got along great and would defend each other to the death, or we would beat each other to death. We did both quite readily. While growing up, I read books to relax. John climbed and jumped out of trees. I was

the bookworm (albeit an attractive one). John was the jock. We accepted our respective stations in life and went on to fulfill our destinies. I went to college, worked in video production and then eventually became a famous librarian. John joined the army to be all he could be, became a scuba diver and then went to welding school. Soon he was one of the top foremen in his company, a large defense contractor. We were in different worlds. We were happy.

Then suddenly, through no fault of his own, the Soviet empire collapsed, peace broke out everywhere, the U.S. defense department scaled back on contracts, and brother John was laid off of his job. Attempting to take advantage of the government's offer for job retraining, brother en-

continued on page 86



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You Gotta Go To School?

continued from page 82

rolled himself in the nearest technical college and set himself on the new road to fame and fortune as a first time college student.

Foreman John is now student John. John is not your average student. This means, of course, that he does not wear jeans with holes purposely cut in them, his hair is not shaved off on one side, and there are no discernible rings or studs in his nose. He also does not use the word "like" sprinkled throughout every sentence. This certainly puts him at an immediate disadvantage to the other "normal" students and has been a cause for great concern to my brother, who is very determined to succeed in this alien environment.

On top of the general culture shock, brother John is the first to admit that he is not the academic type. School has therefore been noticeably hard on him. Not having the academic background many other students have, he sometimes finds himself lost in a sea of weird stuff.

He told me about a recent class discussion on Greek mythology. "The teacher asked us what we thought of Zeus," he said. "I told her that I thought that anybody that was a god, could throw around lightning bolts and pick up women was okay by me." The teacher sort of looked at him funny and said, "Hmmm. That's partly right ... but ... Roger, what do you think?"

"Well, 'front row Roger' starting talking about the whole socio-political history of the Greece thing, all the mythicopsychological interrelationships of the gods and goddesses and why Zeus was a real bone head. Of course, the teacher said that was exactly the answer she was looking for."

"How did he know all that stuff?" said my esteemed bro. "I felt like a weenie brain. I thought Zeus was a squared away dude."

Now is brother John dumb? No. Brother John is merely adrift in a sea of academic stuff on an inner tube while most of those around him are sporting about in speed boats. Brother John does not have the background, yet, to intuitively handle many things that academic types some-

times take for granted. Like when to use the word "sexagenarian" without embarrassing yourself. Or trying to understand how anybody likes opera and why they would even want to. Curious. Confusing. Even frustrating.

How are we as elite information professionals to deal with folks who feel like aliens in academia? Simple. We should treat them as we would any other alien to our world of knowledge splendor. Approach them cautiously but gently. Let them know that no matter how weird they feel, we will be able to assist them with all their info needs. The aliens will then use this knowledge to get better jobs, fulfill their wildest dreams, and make more money than we do. Hopefully, when they are rich and famous, they will then remember us poor but virtuous info professionals. We will then be able to find that financially stable sinecure as librarians to rock and roll stars we've always longed for.

So, always remember this when you are helping some poor helpless soul who has no idea what to do or where to go in the library: Elvis was a helpless soul once too. Wouldn't you have liked to have been his librarian? ☹

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

59 ALPER	51 IEEE
5 AMBASSADOR	2 JAEGER
73 AMIGOS	25 MAJORS
3 ATG	83 MARY ANN LIEBERT
7 BAKER & TAYLOR	71 ME SHARPE
47 BLACKWELL NORTH AMERICA	88 MIDWEST LIBRARY SERVICE
29 BLACKWELL	87 PROFESSIONAL MEDIA
5 BOOK HOUSE	33 PUVILL LIBROS
75 COUTTS	31 READMORE
37 DYNIX	79 SPRINGER
82 EBSCO	44 SPRINGER-VERLAG
81 EASTERN BOOK	57 UNCOVER
61 ELSEVIER SCIENCE	63 VCH
69 ELSEVIER SCIENCE	55 WILEY
77 FAXON	17 YBP
11 HENRY HOLT	

And They Were There

continued from page 58

tion has to be free on the Internet and that users are hackers (Pooley); design new IOLS to the "users'" lowest common denominator (Lynch); vendor has the power (Paschal); users need "in your face HELP" screens (Lynch); the Sharp XGE800U overhead monitor/projector makes classroom instruction/demonstrations what we have always wanted them to be (Cheryl LaGuardia).

Conference Proceedings are available from: **Learned Information**, Inc. 143 Old Marlton Pike, Medford, New Jersey 08055 Phone: (609) 654-6266 for approximately \$30.00 (IOLS), \$55.00 (NOM). Cassette tapes are available from: Minute Tape, 1066 Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road, Suite 18, Sunnyvale, CA 94087 U.S.A. Phone: (408) 732-8450.

In addition to the joint conference there were a variety of satellite events on May 9 and May 13th. Topics covered included: CD-ROM LAN/WAN Access; Database Implementation; Developing and Implementing a Global Intelligence Program; Introduction to Image Databases; The Internet: An Introduction. The satellite events were offered at additional fees each ranging from \$250.00 to \$290.00. ☹